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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/632,258	07/31/2003	Maria E. de Leon	19,245	5492
23556	7590	12/29/2005	EXAMINER	
KIMBERLY-CLARK WORLDWIDE, INC.			HUYNH, KHOA D	
401 NORTH LAKE STREET			ART UNIT	
NEENAH, WI 54956			PAPER NUMBER	
			3751	
DATE MAILED: 12/29/2005				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/632,258

Applicant(s)

DE LEON ET AL.

Examiner

Khoa D. Huynh

Art Unit

3751

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 07 October 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-33 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 5-7, 9, 10 and 20-31 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4, 8, 11-19, 32 and 33 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 28 February 2005 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☒ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

In view of the appeal brief filed on 10/07/2005, PROSECUTION IS HEREBY REOPENED. New grounds of rejection are set forth below.

To avoid abandonment of the application, appellant must exercise one of the following two options:

(1) file a reply under 37 CFR 1.111 (if this Office action is non-final) or a reply under 37 CFR 1.113 (if this Office action is final); or,

(2) initiate a new appeal by filing a notice of appeal under 37 CFR 41.31 followed by an appeal brief under 37 CFR 41.37. The previously paid notice of appeal fee and appeal brief fee can be applied to the new appeal. If, however, the appeal fees set forth in 37 CFR 41.20 have been increased since they were previously paid, then appellant must pay the difference between the increased fees and the amount previously paid.

Drawings

1. The drawing (elected Figure 5) is objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a). The drawings must show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Therefore, the decorative graphic theme is related to the theme of article graphics of a disposable absorbent article must be shown or the feature(s) canceled from the claim(s). No new matter should be entered.

Corrected drawing sheets in compliance with 37 CFR 1.121(d) are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. Any amended replacement drawing sheet should include all of the figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet, even if only one figure is being amended. The figure or figure

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number of an amended drawing should not be labeled as "amended." If a drawing figure is to be canceled, the appropriate figure must be removed from the replacement sheet, and where necessary, the remaining figures must be renumbered and appropriate changes made to the brief description of the several views of the drawings for consistency. Additional replacement sheets may be necessary to show the renumbering of the remaining figures. Each drawing sheet submitted after the filing date of an application must be labeled in the top margin as either "Replacement Sheet" or "New Sheet" pursuant to 37 CFR 1.121(d). If the changes are not accepted by the examiner, the applicant will be notified and informed of any required corrective action in the next Office action. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Specification

2. The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities: page 15, lines 20 and 26, the terms "Fig. 7" should be changed to read --Fig. 9--.

Appropriate correction is suggested.

Claim Objections

3. Claims 1, 32 and 33 are objected to because of the following informalities: all capital letters in the body of the claims should be changed to lower case letters since only the first letter at the beginning of the claim should be capitalized. Appropriate correction is suggested.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

4. Claim 19 and 33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

It is unclear what limitation applicant intends to cover when claim 33 calls for "the decorative graphic theme is related to the theme of article graphics of a disposable absorbent article". As understood, elected Figure 5 shows "the theme of the decorative graphics 60 is nautical". However, the theme of the article graphics 82 is space. Therefore, it is not clear how the decorative graphic (nautical) theme is related to the (space) theme of article graphics of a disposable absorbent article. Furthermore, what is a disposable absorbent article?

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

5. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

6. Claim 33, as presently understood, is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Frankel (5375271).

The Frankel reference discloses a disposable mat (10) having a longitudinal direction, a lateral direction and at least one edge (Fig. 1). The mat also includes a first face (16), a second face (12) and a decorative graphic (18)

located on the second surface. The decorative graphic has a theme which is the head of an elephant (col. 4, lines 15-19) or an elephant head with bubbles coming out of the elephant's trunk (Fig. 1). Such decorative graphic theme is inherently related to the theme of the article graphics of a known disposable diaper (see cited US 6297424 and US 2005/0015066).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 1-4, 8, 11-17, 31 and 32, as presently understood, is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tsuneki (JP 2002-165729) in view of Mason, III (5379558).

Regarding claim 1, the Tsuneki reference discloses a disposable mat (1) having a longitudinal direction, a lateral direction and an edge (Fig. 4). The mat includes a first face (6), a second face opposite the first face(5), and a holding mechanism (at 7) configured to increase the resistance of the mat to movement when the first face is the place is placed upon a planar surface. The Tsuneki reference DIFFERS in that it does not specifically include a line of weakness as claimed. Attention, however, is directed to the Mason, III reference which discloses another disposable mat (Fig. 2) having at least a line of weakness

being configured to allow the separation of a removable portion from the disposable mat. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the Tsuneki mat by employing a line of weakness, in view of the teaching of Mason, III, in order to form the crevice for the Tsuneki mat according to the configuration of the toilet bowl or urinal that is being used.

Regarding claim 2, the first face (6) is liquid impermeable.

Regarding claim 3, the line of weakness is provided by perforation (Mason, III, col. 3, lines 61-65).

Regarding claim 4, even though the modified Tsuneki reference does not specifically disclose that the at least one line of weakness is provided by ultrasonic bonds, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the Tsuneki reference by using the ultrasonic bonds as a preferred thermal forming process to form the at least one line of weakness. Such modification would be considered a mere preferred process for forming a line of weakness on the basis of its suitability for the intended use especially since such forming of a line of weakness could be formed by known thermal forming process (see cited US 4675015, col. 2, lines 10-11 as evidence).

Regarding claim 8, as schematically shown in Figure 2 of Mason, III, the line of weakness is curvilinear.

Regarding claim 11, the mat further includes a mat perimeter. As schematically shown in Figure 2 of Mason, III, the line of weakness is shaped such that upon separating the removable portion from the mat, the mat includes an opening within the mat perimeter.

Regarding claim 12, the modified Tsuneki reference DIFFERS in that it does not specifically disclose the opening is at least 22 cm wide as claimed. It, however, would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to employ such width for the opening size since discovering an optimum value for size of an opening involve only routine skill in the art.

Regarding claims 13 and 14, as schematically shown in Figure 3 or 4 of Tsuneki, the mat includes a first pair of reference marks located on the second surface. The pair of reference marks is configured to indicate where the feet of the user should be placed. The first pair of reference marks is each located a first substantially equal distance from the line of weakness.

Regarding claim 15, the modified Tsuneki reference also DIFFERS in that it does not specifically disclose that the marks locate a first substantially equidistance between 5 and 22 cm as claimed. It, however, would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the modified Tsuneki mat by using such equidistance for placing the marks because (a) such location of the marks allows user to be placed in the central location of the toilet, thereby preventing misaim when urinating and (b)

discovering an optimum value for the preferred distance between the marks involve only routine skill in the art.

Regarding claim 16, each of the pair of first reference marks are provide a by a set of first graphics (which are the foot prints) and are substantially similar.

Regarding claim 17, a pair of footprints depicts the pair of first reference marks.

Regarding claim 31, as schematically shown in Figure 3 or 4 of Tsuneki, the mat has a substantially rectilinear (straight lines) shape.

Regarding claim 32, the Tsuneki reference discloses a disposable mat (1) having a longitudinal direction, a lateral direction and an edge (Fig. 4). The mat includes a liquid impermeable first face (6), an absorbent second face opposite the first face (5), and a holding mechanism (at 7) configured to increase the resistance of the mat to movement when the first face is the place is placed upon a planar surface. The Tsuneki reference DIFFERS in that it does not specifically include a line of weakness as claimed. Attention, however, is directed to the Mason, III reference which discloses another disposable mat (Fig. 2) having at least a line of weakness being configured to allow the separation of a removable portion from the disposable mat. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the Tsuneki mat by employing a line of weakness, in view of the teaching of Mason, III, in order to form the crevice for the Tsuneki mat according to the configuration of the toilet bowl or urinal that is being used. As schematically shown in Figure 3

or 4 of Tsuneki, the mat includes a first pair of reference marks located on the second surface. The pair of reference marks is configured to indicate where the feet of the user should be placed. The first pair of reference marks is each located a first substantially equal distance from the line of weakness.

9. Claims 18 and 19, as best understood since the claimed limitations are vague and unclear, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the modified Tsuneki (as discussed above) in view of Tokiko (2002209799).

The modified Tsuneki reference also DIFFERS in that it does not specifically include a decorative graphic as claimed. Attention, however, is directed to the Tokiko reference which discloses another mat for protecting the floor. The mat includes a decorative graphic (Fig. 3). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the modified Barker mat by employing a decorative graphic, in view of the teaching of Tokiko, in order to provide visual stimulation to the user while using the mat. Regarding the limitation "related in theme", the decorative graphic appears to be stars stimulation graphics. Such first set of graphics and the decorative graphic are related in theme since the first set of graphics (foot prints) tells a young user, i.e. an infant where to stand when potty training and the decorative graphic provides artistic stimulations to the young user when using the toilet.

10. Claim 33, as best understood since the claimed limitations are vague and unclear, is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tsuneki (JP 2002-165729).

The Tsuneki reference discloses a disposable mat (1) having a longitudinal direction, a lateral direction and an edge (Fig. 4). The mat includes a first face (6), a second face opposite the first face (5). As schematically shown in Figure 3 or 4 of Tsuneki, the mat includes a first pair of reference marks located on the second surface. The pair of reference marks is configured to indicate where the feet of the user should be placed. Furthermore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to recognize that the first pair of reference marks is a pair of footprints which are inherently a designed graphics that would be used in other disposable absorbent article (see cited US 6297424 & US 2005/0065489).

Response to Arguments

11. Also applicant's arguments regarding to the Frankel reference, presented in the appeal brief, filed on 10/07/2005 have been fully considered. However, such arguments are deemed not persuasive.

Applicant asserts that the Frankel reference does not teach a mat including a decorative graphic having a decorative graphic theme where the decorative graphic theme is related to the theme of article graphics of a disposable absorbent article. See remarks section, page 8. The examiner is respectfully traversed.

On the contrary, Frankel does disclose a bath mat having graphics with a decorative theme that is an animal (the elephant head or a spraying elephant head). Such decorative graphics have theme that are related to the graphics on a known, disclosed diaper such as the one described in the US 6297424 (col. 3, lines 55-65; col. 4, lines 39-49) or the one described in the US 2005/0015066 (Fig. 6D). Thus, the Frankel reference does disclose the invention as claimed in claim 33.

Also, applicant's arguments with respect to the pending claims have been considered but are moot in view of the new grounds of rejection as discussed supra.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Khoa D. Huynh whose telephone number is (571) 272-4888. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (7:00-3:30).

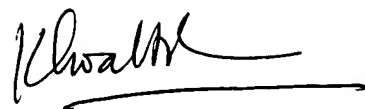
If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Justine Yu can be reached on (571) 272-4835. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Khoa D. Huynh', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Khoa D. Huynh
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3751

HK
12/26/2005